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Wednesday, 18 April 2018, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Meza-Cuadra	(Peru)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Zambrana Torrelio
	China	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Dah
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Woldegerima
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren
	Poland	Mr. Radomski
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Mrs. Haley

Agenda

Letter dated 13 March 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2018/218)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Letter dated 13 March 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2018/218)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, to participate in in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mrs. Nakamitsu.

Mrs. Nakamitsu: I thank you, Sir, for the invitation to brief the Security Council on the incident in Salisbury, in the United Kingdom, on 4 March 2018. As I have no independent information on this issue, I will be conveying information kindly provided by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

The Council has met previously to discuss the 4 March incident in Salisbury involving a toxic chemical — allegedly a nerve agent — and the poisoning and hospitalization of three individuals as a result. As the Council is therefore aware, and as part of its response to this incident, the United Kingdom requested technical assistance from the OPCW Technical Secretariat under article VIII of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which states that the Technical Secretariat shall provide technical assistance and technical evaluation to States parties in the implementation of the provisions of the Convention, including evaluation of scheduled and unscheduled chemicals.

Accordingly, the OPCW Director-General decided to dispatch a team to the United Kingdom for a technical assistance visit. The technical assistance team deployed to the United Kingdom on 19 March for predeployment and from 21 to 23 March for full deployment. In the course of its work, the team received information on the medical conditions of the three individuals affected and collected blood samples from those individuals, under full chain of custody, for delivery to the OPCW laboratory and subsequent analysis by OPCW-designated laboratories.

In addition to those activities, the team conducted on-site collection of environmental samples, again under full chain of custody. The team also requested, and received, splits of samples taken by British authorities for comparative purposes and to verify the analysis of the United Kingdom. The team was briefed on the toxic chemical that had been identified by the United Kingdom. It reviewed the analytical results and data from chemical analysis of biomedical samples collected by the United Kingdom authorities from the affected individuals and of environmental samples collected on site.

The OPCW has since stated that the results of the analysis of biomedical samples conducted by OPCW-designated laboratories demonstrate the exposure of the three affected individuals to that toxic chemical. In addition, the results of the analysis of environmental samples conducted by OPCW-designated laboratories demonstrate the presence of the toxic chemical in the samples. Finally, the results of the analysis by the OPCW-designated laboratories of the environmental and biomedical samples collected by the team of the OPCW technical assistance visit confirm the findings of the United Kingdom relating to the identity of the toxic chemical that was used in Salisbury on 4 March. The technical assistance visit team noted that the toxic chemical in question was of high purity.

Based on the results of the sample analysis by four OPCW-designated laboratories, the OPCW Technical Secretariat prepared a report containing and elaborating on the information that I have just shared. On 12 April, that report was transmitted to the United Kingdom and, at the request of the United Kingdom, to all other States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention. The OPCW has also prepared and made publicly available a summary of the report.

Speaking at a meeting of the OPCW Executive Council today, the Director-General underscored that the reliability and technical capabilities of the OPCW-designated laboratories have been subject to close and rigorous scrutiny over the years. He added that the States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention can be assured of the credibility and integrity of that network. He further noted that the work of the technical assistance visit in relation to the incident was carried out by the OPCW independently without the involvement

or support of other States parties and that it was not part of the United Kingdom's own internal investigation.

The Secretary-General has expressed his deep concern about the assessment that a nerve agent was employed in a targeted manner aimed at inflicting harm or death. On many occasions, the Secretary-General has also expressed his support for the work of the OPCW. In that regard, he welcomed the request of the United Kingdom to independently verify the toxic chemical that was used in the incident. The use of nerve agents — or any other chemical weapons — by any party under any circumstances is unacceptable and is a serious violation of international law.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her informative briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I would like to thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, who briefed us on the findings of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). On behalf of the United Kingdom, I would also like to thank the OPCW and its staff. The Security Council invited us to keep it updated. I thank you, Mr. President, for agreeing to this meeting today. We wish to brief the Council on the most recent stage in the investigation. I will also cover briefly findings, attribution and a refutation of some of the public statements that have been made by Russia against my country. This meeting is being held immediately after the meeting of the OPCW Executive Council in The Hague to which the High Representative referred.

If I may, I would just like to stress that the report itself has been circulated without any redaction or amendment to the States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). To underscore that point, I would like to underscore that the report to the members of the Executive Council is exactly the same report as the United Kingdom itself received. As the High Representative set out, the findings of the OPCW confirm the United Kingdom's analysis of the identity of the toxic chemical. It supports our finding that a military-grade nerve agent was used in Salisbury. As our investigation has found and as the OPCW has verified, the highest concentrations of the agent were found on the handle of Mr. Skripal's front door. It is therefore the chemical that we said it was. That has been confirmed by an independent mechanism.

I would like to say a word about the use of the term Novichok. It is a term that we use to describe such chemicals. We use the Russian term for such nerve agents. The OPCW report itself does not use the term Novichok. However, the point that I wish to make is that it is the chemical that we said it was. There should therefore not be any lack of clarity on that point.

The report sets out the full forensic chain of custody. It sets out how there could be no contamination. It explains how the environmental samples are analysed by two laboratories and the biomedical samples by two further laboratories. Finally, the report notes the absence of any significant amounts of impurities in the chemicals that were detected. High purity is the description given in paragraph 11 of the executive summary. That in turn suggests that a highly sophisticated laboratory — that is, a State laboratory — made the chemicals.

The identification of the nerve agent used is an essential piece of technical evidence in the ongoing investigation. However, the Porton Down analysis and the OPCW report do not identify the country or the laboratory of origin of the agent used in the attack. I would like to explain the wider picture that has led the United Kingdom to assess that there is no plausible alternative explanation than Russian State responsibility for what happened in Salisbury. In our view, only Russia had the technical means, operational experience and motive to target the Skripals.

First, if I may turn to the technical means, a combination of credible open-source reporting and intelligence shows that in the 1980s the Soviet Union developed a new class of fourth-generation nerve agents. In Russia, and then more broadly, they were known as Novichoks. The key institute responsible for that work is a branch of the State Scientific Research Institute for Organic Chemistry and Technology at Shikhany. The code word for the offensive chemical weapons programme of which Novichoks were one part was "Foliant". It is highly likely that Novichoks were developed to prevent detection by the West and to circumvent international chemical weapons controls. The Russian State has previously produced Novichoks and would still be capable of doing so today. Within the past decade, Russia has produced and stockpiled small quantities of Novichoks.

Russia's chemical weapons programme continued after the collapse of the Soviet Union. By 1993, when Russia signed the Chemical Weapons Convention, it

is likely that some Novichoks had passed acceptance testing. That meant that they could be used by the Russian military. Russia's declaration under the CWC failed to report work on Novichoks. Russia further developed Novichoks after ratifying the Convention. In the mid-2000s, President Putin himself was closely involved in the Russian chemical weapons programme.

It is highly unlikely that any former Soviet Republic other than Russia pursued an offensive chemical weapons programme after independence. No terrorist group or non-State actor would be able to produce that agent in the purity described by the OPCW testing. That is something that Russia has acknowledged.

Secondly, I would like to refer to operational experience. Russia has a proven record of conducting State-sponsored assassination, including on the territory of the United Kingdom. The independent inquiry into the death of Alexander Litvinenko concluded in January 2016 that he had been deliberately poisoned with polonium; that the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation had directed the operation; and that President Putin probably had approved it. During the 2000s, Russia commenced programmes to test means of delivering chemical warfare agents and to train personnel from special units in the use of such weapons. That programme subsequently included the investigation of ways to deliver nerve agents, including by application to door handles. Within the past decade, as I said, Russia has produced and stockpiled small quantities of Novichok under this programme.

Thirdly, there is motive. Sergei Skripal was a former Russian military intelligence officer from the Main Intelligence Directorate. He was convicted of espionage in 2006. It is highly likely that the Russian intelligence services view at least some of its defectors as legitimate targets for assassination. We have information indicating Russian intelligence service interest in the Skripals, and this dates back at least as far as 2013 when email accounts belonging to Yulia Skripal were targeted by Main Intelligence Directorate cyberspecialists. None of those stocks and production have been declared in Russia's chemical weapons declaration. It is clear that Russia is in breach of its obligations to declare its chemical weapons programme.

If I may, I would now like to turn to an update on the Skripals themselves, their medical condition and the consular situation, before turning to the investigation itself. The Russians asked us to pass on the offer to provide consular services to Yulia, as well as their request to see her, and we have done that. Yulia herself said in a statement on 11 April:

> "I have access to friends and family, and I have been made aware of my specific contacts at the Russian Embassy who have kindly offered me their assistance in any way they can. At the moment, I do not wish to avail myself of their services, but if I change my mind I know how to contact them."

According to the medical update from the Medical Director at Salisbury District Hospital, in the four weeks since the incident in the city centre, the Skripals have received round-the-clock care from clinicians, and they have been able to draw on the advice and support from world-leading experts in this field. Because of the Skripals' right to privacy, I will not go into great detail about the treatment we have been providing. However, we can say the following. Nerve agents work by attaching themselves to a particular enzyme in the body, which then stops the nerves from working properly. That results in symptoms such as sickness, hallucinations and confusion. The hospital, in treating the patients, was able to stabilize them, ensuring that the patients could breathe and that blood could continue to circulate. They then needed to use a variety of different drugs to support the patients until they could create more enzymes to replace those affected by the poisoning. The hospital also used specialized decontamination techniques to remove any residual toxins. Both patients have responded exceptionally well to the treatment that we have been providing, but both patients are at different stages in their recovery.

Turning to decontamination and the investigation, as we have said before this has been one of the most comprehensive and complex investigations into the use of chemical weapons ever undertaken. It has involved 250 police detectives. They have been supported by a range of experts and partners, and they have gone through more than 5,000 hours of video footage. They have interviewed more than 500 witnesses. The British Government announced on 17 April that decontamination work in Salisbury is starting this week, and it will take some months to complete. In total, nine sites, including three in the city centre, have been identified as requiring specialist decontamination. That will involve a complex process of testing, the removal of items that could be contaminated and that might, in turn, harbour residual amounts of the agent. It also involves chemical cleaning and retesting. All

waste will be safely removed and incinerated. Each site will not be released until decontamination is complete.

We have heard a number of allegations against the United Kingdom and against the findings from the Russian Federation. If I may, I would like to deal briefly with some of the most egregious.

One accusation that we have faced today and in recent days was that Yulia had not been poisoned — that the British Government had in fact drugged her, put her in a coma and then injected her with the poisons that were found. That is more than fanciful; it is outlandish. That sort of thing may happen in Russia, but I can assure the Council that it does not and will not happen in the United Kingdom.

Secondly, the Russian Foreign Minister, Mr. Sergei Lavrov, has claimed that traces of the toxic chemical BZ were found in the samples analysed by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and this disclosed the location of one of the independent laboratories that the OPCW used. The OPCW itself has not disclosed the identity of the labs, nor have they published any information about BZ samples in the executive summary that they released to the public. So, it is an interesting question: How and why does Russia think it knows who tested the samples and what result they found? By making that confidential information public, Russia has in turn breached the confidentiality that States parties owe the OPCW under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

On the substance of that allegation, the Director-General of the OPCW explained in his statement today that a sample separate from the samples taken from the Skripals and their environment was sent along with the samples taken from Salisbury to the designated laboratories for testing. That is called a control sample, and it is a routine procedure carried out in these tests so that the OPCW can test whether the labs' findings are accurate. The Director-General has confirmed unreservedly that there was no BZ in any of the samples taken by the OPCW in Salisbury. I believe that Russia is fully familiar with this procedure, so I would be grateful to know what motive Mr. Lavrov had in setting out this obfuscation.

Russia continues to be asked to be involved in the United Kingdom's independent investigation. It is quite clear both that it is suspected of involvement and that its behaviour has undermined its credibility on this. As I said before, this is an arsonist and firefighter trying to investigate his own fire. Russia has failed to establish any good reason under the CWC or otherwise why it should be involved in the United Kingdom's independent police investigation. I repeat what I said at the first Council briefing in which I took part concerning Salisbury (see S/PV.8224). We did go to the Russian Federation before we went to the OPCW to ask if this was a rogue attempt by one of its agents, and if so to cooperate with us in trying to get to the bottom of it and resolve the case. The Russian Federation did not agree to that request. Rather, it refused to take it seriously.

On 13 April, the Russian Federation transmitted to the United Kingdom a list of questions under article IX of the CWC. We will respond as soon as possible and certainly within the 10 days stipulated in the Convention. We will respond to Russia, which made the request, but we will share our response with all States parties. Furthermore, if the CWC allows, I will of course share it with members of the Council. Russia said that its requests were urgent, and it has asked us for an answer by no later than 17 April, which we have not done because we have 10 days to respond. However, we regret that Russia did not consider it urgent when we asked it for an explanation on 12 March. Our questions remain unanswered.

That concludes the briefing I have to offer the Council today. We are at the disposal of the Council to answer any questions. We are also very willing to continue to keep the Council updated if the Council would like that. We are happy to do that in person, or possibly, so as not to disrupt the timetable, in writing. I should mention also that we held an open briefing for all Member States yesterday at the General Assembly, and there were a number of questions that we were able to answer.

Mr. Zambrana Torrelio (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, we would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, for her briefing, of which we take due note. Secondly, we welcome the speedy recovery of those affected by the incident in question.

Bolivia believes that the use of chemical weapons by any actor in any circumstance is despicable as an act that undermines international peace and security, and we therefore reiterate our concern about the challenges being posed to the non-proliferation regime. Any

use of toxic chemical weapons, agents or products as weapons is completely reprehensible to humankind and is contrary to the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention, as well as international law. The Chemical Weapons Convention is a multilateral instrument adopted by 192 States. It is important that this model multilateral agreement continue with the same integrity and independence.

It is essential to maintain the credibility of that international instrument in the face of allegations of the use of toxic chemical weapons, agents or products, and to that end any investigation must be conducted strictly in accordance with the provisions of the Convention. In that regard, we believe that all provisions of the Convention should be used in any investigation to address the concerns raised by the relevant parties in accordance with the procedures set out therein. This research must be broad, impartial and objective in order to reach evidence-based conclusions.

Finally, it is essential that the countries concerned use the appropriate diplomatic channels in order to comply with the principles of mutual respect and bilateral cooperation so that this situation can be resolved through as much dialogue as possible, especially with a view to strengthening the non-proliferation regime.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): I thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing. I thank my British colleague for keeping the Security Council updated.

Last week, the Council met five times to discuss the chemical weapons attack in Douma. Today we are here yet again to talk about chemical weapons. This time it is about a military-grade nerve agent used against two people on British soil. In the constant push of meeting after meeting here in this Chamber, it is easy to lose track of what this means. We are rapidly confronting a frightening new reality. If chemical weapons can appear in a small English town, where might they start appearing next? None of us will be immune from this threat unless we immediately start rebuilding our consensus against chemical weapons.

I will not engage in an argument over self-evident facts. I will not trade accusations of shameful behaviour with those who have no shame. I will not waste the Security Council's time. I will only say this — the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has released an independent report that confirmed the United Kingdom's lab analysis of the toxic chemical that was used in Salisbury. Three people were seriously injured. Hundreds were exposed. This act was brazen and in complete defiance of the international consensus against the use of chemical weapons.

As we have stated previously, the United States agrees with the United Kingdom's assessment that Russia is responsible for the chemical weapons in Salisbury. Whether it be through Russia's direct act or the result of its irresponsibly losing control of the agent, which could be worse, our support for our British friends and colleagues is unwavering. Douma and Salisbury are just the two latest incidents involving the use of chemical weapons around the world. They offer us a reminder that these are weapons of terror. They are indiscriminate. They have no place in the civilized world.

We hope our colleagues on the Security Council will join us as they have before in delivering a clear condemnation of the use of a Russian nerve agent on another Member's soil, because unless we stop this now, there will be more death and more scenes that nobody wants to see. There is nothing more troubling than the idea that the use of a weapon of mass destruction becomes routine.

Last year, it was Malaysia and Khan Shaykhun. Last month, it was Salisbury. Last week, it was Douma. If we do not come together soon and take a firm unequivocal stance against this deadly trend, the next attack will come, and it could very well come closer to home for one of us. Then, of course, it will be too late — too late for the victims, too late for the wounded survivors, too late for the women and children. This is a matter of basic morality. We cannot in good conscience allow this to continue.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the United Kingdom for this very timely update on the circumstances of the chemical-weapons attack in Salisbury on 4 March. I also thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Nakamitsu, for her very clear briefing.

The day after the hostile act of 4 March, France expressed its full solidarity with the United Kingdom, and I wish to reiterate it here today. We unreservedly shared the British analysis that, on the one hand, it is highly probable that the Russian Federation is responsible for the attack and, on the other hand, there are no other plausible explanations for the attempted

assassination of Sergei Skripal and his daughter. We have drawn the necessary conclusions.

I commend the United Kingdom's commitment to transparency and the way in which it has conducted this matter, in full accordance with the relevant provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention. I recall in this regard that the Convention requires States to conduct their own investigations of an event occurring on their national territory and that the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is to play an independent and impartial assistance role. These provisions have been fully followed and respected in the matter before us today. I also reiterate our full support for the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat teams, whose commitment and professionalism I commend.

The OPCW results, as they have been presented to us, now speak for themselves. They confirm the British conclusions. A high-quality chemical agent, Novichok, considered to be militarily produced, was indeed used in Salisbury against Sergei Skripal and his daughter. The characteristics of this chemical agent, independently identified by each of the OPCW laboratories, and in particular its high level of purity, testify to a know-how that only a State could master. Its manufacture and handling require equipment and expertise that cannot be improvised.

In the light of these elements, possible motives and precedents on British territory, the United Kingdom legitimately asked the Russian Federation to answer a series of questions. These questions have all remained unanswered for over a month now. We therefore call on Russia once again, since it claims to want to cooperate, to respond to the British questions without delay. Russia must provide all necessary clarifications on the possible development of such a chemical-weapons programme.

The increase in number of chemical attacks appalls the conscience of the world, violates the law and threatens our security. It is not only a major affront to the international community and to the Security Council; it also raises the risk of a terrible regression for all of us. Indeed, let us make no mistake. In Salisbury, Douma and elsewhere, the oldest and strongest foundations of our collective security have been deliberately violated, and thus put at risk, while the forums charged with speaking out and enforcing the law are systematically hampered. That is the heart of the matter.

Let us make no mistake. Those who obstruct our action, who violate and deceive with respect to their commitments, who deliberately carry out disinformation campaigns and distort the facts with a view to dividing and disorienting public opinion are responsible for a serious normalization of the use of chemical weapons. Furthermore, they contribute to the risk of undermining the non-proliferation regime at a time when they should be its guarantors.

France, which suffered first-hand the devastating effects of chemical weapons during the First World War, will never allow their use to go unpunished, whether in Syria, Europe or elsewhere. Any time a chemical weapon is used, regardless of where and by whom, all light must be shed on that use and those responsible must be held accountable. However, that is not enough. We must do everything we can to curb the serious threat of the normalization of the use of chemical weapons. That should be our shared priority. That is the whole purpose of the partnership we launched in Paris, which 28 States and organizations have chosen to join, including four this past week alone. Faced with such a threat to our collective security, there can be no room for impunity. That is also the whole point of our action on the Syrian dossier.

The repeated use of chemical weapons undermines international law and challenges our ability to safeguard the values, principles and rules that underpin the United Nations and our work. Because the very foundation of our security is threatened and because we must live up to our commitments and responsibilities, there is no other acceptable or possible option than to come together to restore the essential taboo prohibiting the use of chemical weapons. Let us walk that demanding path together. The international community can rest assured of France's commitment to that end, alongside all its partners.

Mr. Ma Zhaoxu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I would like to thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing.

China has been closely following the developments related to the Salisbury incident since it took place in the United Kingdom in March. We support addressing the issue within the framework of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in accordance with the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention. I wish to reiterate that China is firmly opposed to the use of chemical weapons

by any State, any organization or any individual under any circumstances. That is our categorical and consistent position.

We take note that the OPCW Technical Secretariat has recently issued a report on technical assistance provided with regard to the Salisbury incident. At the same time, we also note that the parties concerned have yet to agree on mutually acceptable conclusions. Further investigations are required to determine the nature of the incident and the parties to be held accountable. China believes that a comprehensive, objective and impartial investigation should be conducted, and on the basis of solid evidence, conclusions that can stand the test of facts and history should be drawn. In the current circumstances, all parties should pursue their consultations and carry out further investigations to uncover the truth.

The international community is facing numerous challenges and all parties should reject the Cold War mentality, join hands to maintain world peace, stability and security; remain committed to a new type of international relations based on mutual respect, equity, justice and win-win cooperation; and build a community of a shared future for humankind. Council members in particular should remain united so as to jointly fulfil the responsibilities of maintaining world peace and security.

Mr. Radomski (Poland): I would like to thank High Representative Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing.

Poland has already expressed its grave concern about the use of the nerve agent in the attempt to murder Mr. Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia Skripal on 4 March in Salisbury, United Kingdom.

The report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has confirmed the findings of the British Porton Down laboratory on the agent used in Salisbury. It clearly indicates that the reaction of the international community in support of the United Kingdom was appropriate. We are grateful to the British Government for sharing, in the spirit of transparency, the results of the technical assistance visit. We also thank the OPCW leadership and the technical assistance visit members for the outstanding and professional work they have done in that regard.

Let me recall that the European Council has agreed unanimously with the Government of the United Kingdom's assessment that it is highly likely that the Russian Federation is responsible for this incident. In that situation, we repeat our call on Russia to address the legitimate questions raised by the British Government and now corroborated by the results of the OPCW's technical assessment visit report, and to provide immediate, full and complete disclosure to the OPCW of any programme with relevance to the case.

Poland would like to restate its strong conviction that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be identified and held accountable. The incident in Salisbury is yet another example of a violation of international law and the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention. As we have said many times, no such act can be left unanswered since it not only undermines the basic sense of justice, but also leads to the erosion of the non-proliferation and disarmament regimes, and in consequence undermines the security of all of us.

Mr. Dah (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation thanks the United Kingdom for having initiated this briefing on the letter (S/2018/218) of 13 March from Mrs. Theresa May, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, following the events that took place in Salisbury on 4 March. We also thank Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for her briefing.

Côte d'Ivoire takes note of the findings of the report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) confirming the identity of the nerve agent used in Salisbury on 4 March, which led to the poisoning and hospitalization of three people. It welcomes the British authorities' request to the OPCW to share the report with all States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention and to make its summary public.

My country is paying particular attention to the follow-up to the investigation conducted by the British authorities with a view to conclusively shedding light on that incident. We call on the various stakeholders to exercise restraint and to cooperate with the investigation, in accordance with their international obligations. My country reaffirms its principled position condemning any use of chemical weapons, regardless of the perpetrators, in times of both peace and war.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the collective efforts under way to establish an accountability mechanism with regard to the use of chemical

weapons. The international community's commitment to combating impunity remains fundamental to ensuring respect for the non-proliferation regime and for our shared commitment to achieving a world free of chemical weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): We thank High Representative Nakamitsu for providing us with an update on the current status of the ongoing investigation into the incident that took place in Salisbury. We would also like to share the following observations.

Kazakhstan closely follows the developments of the case, which is undoubtedly a blatant and unacceptable criminal use of chemical weapons. At the same time, it is clear that there are no conclusive findings on those responsible. The case definitely requires further objective and transparent investigation to determine the circumstances surrounding the crime.

Regrettably, the subject of the use of chemical weapons has become a regular item on the agenda of the Security Council. As it happens, the same subject is also the Achilles heel of the Council, as it is becoming increasingly difficult for us to pass judgment since we are not experts on the chemical substances used in this particular incident. It is also difficult to maintain the constructive dialogue and goodwill required to reach balanced and consensus-based decisions because of increased politicization surrounding the issue.

The confrontational spirit and rhetoric in the Council are being transferred to other forums and platforms, including The Hague discourse, where States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention are also becoming divided. It is now a challenge for them to hold professional and exclusively technical discussions on highly important issues. Leading countries are unable to reach a compromise and find common ground for negotiations that will build mechanisms for countering the threat of chemical weapons. It is regrettable that such weapons of mass destruction, which had been relegated to the past, are being used again.

As a country affected by the consequences of weapons of mass destruction, we remain firmly committed to the fight against the use of chemical weapons and are ready to take constructive part in the development of an investigative tool. Kazakhstan counts on and looks forward to an ongoing, comprehensive, objective and transparent investigation into the incident, in accordance with existing norms of international law. We call on parties concerned to exercise restraint and refrain from hasty actions, without providing full and irrefutable evidence of the involvement or culpability of one side or the other.

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons now has a even more complicated but very crucial task — to render all possible assistance to resolve the tense relations between the States members of the Convention. The organization must realize its important role as an objective and impartial mediator. It is the best and most qualified advocate for the non-proliferation agenda. Patient dialogue and constructive cooperation from all sides are the main factors for achieving best results.

As the main body for ensuring international peace and security, the Council should not allow divergent positions on the threat of weapons of mass destruction. It could lead to escalating conflict and high tensions that could derail its work.

Mr. Orrenius Skau (Sweden): Let me begin by thanking the United Kingdom for taking the initiative to update the Security Council.

I also thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, for her comprehensive briefing.

Sweden has been clear in condemning in the strongest terms the attempted murder of individuals with a nerve agent on British soil. We fully stand by the common position of the European Union on the matter. We share the assessment of the Government of the United Kingdom that it is highly likely that the Russian Federation is responsible and that there is no other plausible alternative explanation. We reiterate our strong solidarity with the United Kingdom, our close friend and European Union partner, and our support for its ongoing investigation. We welcome the open and transparent manner in which the United Kingdom has approached the matter, including by arranging an open briefing yesterday for all Member States.

We also welcome the continued cooperation between the United Kingdom and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in full compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention. We thank the OPCW for its prompt reaction to the request of the United Kingdom and for its professionalism. Sweden has full confidence in the authoritative findings of the OPCW, which confirm the

identity of the toxic chemical. It is a matter of utmost concern. We reiterate our call on the Russian Federation to answer questions posed by the United Kingdom. Let me take this opportunity to underline our full support to the OPCW, the independent organization tasked with overseeing the chemical weapons ban.

Once again we condemn in the strongest terms the use of all chemical weapons, which is repugnant and strictly prohibited under international law. We must be vigilant in our efforts to ensure that the integrity of the chemical weapons ban is respected.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Republic of Equatorial Guinea thanks you, Sir, for convening today's meeting at the request of the United Kingdom. We also thank the United Kingdom for sharing the findings of the investigation conducted by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

We thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea has closely followed the developments surrounding the use of a nerve agent in Salisbury on 4 March. According to the report issued by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the results of laboratory tests of the blood samples taken from Mr. Skripal, his daughter and the police officer have confirmed that they were exposed to high purity toxic chemical agents. The Republic of Equatorial Guinea condemns in the strongest terms the fact that the toxic chemical was used on human beings. I request that we find a way to determine without a doubt the person or persons responsible for using that substance so that the proper legal action can be taken.

There should be no doubt or speculation surrounding the identity and culpability of the perpetrators. Conclusive evidence is required, such as the results of tests conducted by the OPCW to determine and confirm the chemical agent to which Mr. Skripal and his daughter were exposed on 4 March. In that regard, we congratulate the OPCW on its excellent work and professionalism. As investigations continue to unravel the plot and identify the perpetrators, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea requests that the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the United Kingdom show restraint and find an appropriate and reasonable way to manage the situation through direct contact. We hope that the diplomatic crisis can be resolved.

Equatorial Guinea's wishes Mr. Skripal, his daughter and the British police officer affected by the attack a full and speedy recovery.

Let me conclude by reaffirming Equatorial Guinea's complete rejection of the manufacture, stockpiling, use and distribution of chemical weapons, wherever and by whomever. Once again, we stress the importance of establishing a transparent, independent and professional monitoring mechanism to determine those responsible for the use of chemical weapons.

Mr. Woldegerima (Ethiopia): We thank the United Kingdom for taking the initiative to convene today's meeting. We also thank Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for her briefing.

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is the appropriate international body to address the incident in Salisbury. We know that it has presented its report on the activities carried out in support of a request for technical assistance by the United Kingdom in relation to the incident. We also followed the fifty-ninth meeting of the Executive Council of the OPCW, where the issue was discussed in the morning at The Hague. We take note of what the Director-General of the OPCW said in his opening statement with regard to questions arising about the result of the analysis, including assurances that the OPCW will continue to use the Executive Council meetings or briefings to inform the States parties about its activities and clarify certain points that need to be addressed. Indeed, the issue is very sensitive and its implication for global peace and security is so grave that it is vital that the OPCW does so, and we appreciate its work.

We agree that preserving the credibility and integrity of the international regime on the use of chemical weapons is vital to global peace and security. Of course, we understand that the work of the OPCW technical team was limited to identifying the toxic chemical used. As was discussed at the Executive Council meeting today, the OPCW report did not identify the country or laboratory of origin of the agent used in the attack. It will therefore still be important to ensure that a thorough, professional and independent investigation is undertaken. We believe that will be essential for getting to the bottom of the truth and bringing those responsible to justice.

What is clear from the Salisbury incident, and all the other chemical-weapon attacks that have happened recently, is that the use of chemical weapons is becoming normalized and the international norm on the issue is being seriously undermined. That should be extremely worrying to us all. The use of chemical weapons by any actor, under any circumstances, is totally unacceptable, and we reiterate our strongest condemnation. However, we know and understand that we can address that serious challenge only if all of us provide the necessary cooperation and abide by the rules that we set ourselves in all transparency and fidelity to the truth.

Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren (Netherlands): I would like to begin by thanking the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, for her briefing. The Kingdom of the Netherlands welcomes the update provided by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom on the latest developments in the follow-up to the shocking chemical-weapon attack that took place in Salisbury last month. I will make three points. First, I will reiterate our condemnation of the attack and reaffirm our solidarity with the United Kingdom. Secondly, I will welcome the clarity provided by the independent findings of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Thirdly, I will urge the Russian Federation to change its course and cooperate fully.

First, on the unacceptable nature of the attack. At both the previous meetings on the matter (see S/PV.8203 and S/PV.8224), we expressed our shock about the reckless attack with a military-grade nerve agent on British soil. The Kingdom of the Netherlands has strongly condemned that attack in the Security Council and on many other occasions. We stand in full solidarity with the United Kingdom and fully subscribe to the conclusions of the European Council on 22 March.

Secondly, last Thursday, at the specific request of the United Kingdom, the full report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons was shared with all member States of the OPCW. That report, containing the analysis of environmental and biomedical samples, was carried out at the request of the United Kingdom. In doing so, the United Kingdom has acted in full accordance with OPCW procedures, as has been confirmed by the Director-General of the OPCW. We appreciate the transparency observed by the United Kingdom in the process. The OPCW's independent analysis confirmed the findings of the United Kingdom's authorities that the attack on Yulia and Sergei Skripal was carried out with the use of a specific type of Novichok. That fact is now beyond dispute. We welcome the clarity that the OPCW report has provided.

Thirdly, there is a need for Russian cooperation. The findings of the OPCW report have made it even more evident than before that it is highly likely that the Russian Federation bears responsibility for the attack. There is no plausible alternative explanation. In that light, it is not helpful that the authorities of the Russian Federation continue to disseminate alternative, implausible versions of the events in Salisbury. Nor do we approve of attempts by the Russian Federation, at the OPCW and elsewhere, to create procedural hurdles for the United Kingdom's authorities to carry out their follow-up to that chemical attack on their sovereign soil.

We urge the Russian Federation to change its course and cooperate fully. We urge the Russian Federation to provide the United Kingdom with all information relating to unanswered questions about the course of events in Salisbury on 4 March. We call on the Russian Federation to cooperate with efforts to bring those responsible to justice and to provide full disclosure of its Novichok programme to the OPCW. In conclusion, any use of chemical weapons constitutes a threat to international law, peace and security that is unacceptable. I reiterate our call for full accountability for that horrific crime.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by thanking the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, for her valuable briefing on the outcome of the report published by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on 12 April, concerning the incident that took place on 4 March in Salisbury, United Kingdom, with the use of a toxic chemical substance that led to the poisoning and hospitalization of three people. I would also like to thank the representative of the United Kingdom for her detailed briefing on the latest developments. Allow me to reiterate my best wishes to the victims of this incident, a father and his daughter, and to the policemen and civilians affected by the attack for their quick recovery.

The laboratory analysis of the OPCW confirms through environmental and biomedical samples the use during the incident in Salisbury of toxic chemical substance with a high degree of purity, classified as neurotoxins. The State of Kuwait reaffirms its firm

position condemning the use of chemical weapons by any party, in any circumstance and in any place. We also condemn the production, acquisition, stockpiling or retention of chemical weapons, as well as their direct or indirect transfer, in line with article I of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), to which the State of Kuwait has been party since 1997.

We express our solidarity with the United Kingdom and support it in all actions and measures to be taken regarding the investigation of that incident. The State of Kuwait believes in the importance of abiding by international law and international norms, and in upholding the maintenance of international peace and security, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. We call on all parties concerned to cooperate with all the ongoing investigations through the OPCW and in accordance with the provisions of the CWC.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing, and we are so very grateful to the British for convening today's meeting, which we were eagerly awaiting. Unfortunately, however, we have not heard anything new from it today.

When I listen to some of my colleagues, I feel that we have already moved on from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and are in *Through the Looking Glass* instead. Our Western partners are not interested in the truth, and not just on this matter. They are not listening and they will not hear. In Russian we say that you are talking to them about Foma and they are talking to you about Yerem — in other words, we are talking about apples and oranges.

Today we heard the same lie that the United Kingdom has already used to try to mislead the international community. It is claimed that the United Kingdom has not received from us the answers to the questions that it requested. For the Council's information, I would once again like to point out that the questions that we have been asked actually consist of that same 24-hour ultimatum that boils down to one question: "Why did you do it?". Nevertheless, some of Britain's allies, with a level of persistence that deserves a better subject, have repeatedly urged us to answer the United Kingdom's questions and cooperate with it. If they have questions that we have not been asked, perhaps they can pass them on to us, assuming that Britain is not going to give us any additional questions. We would be very grateful.

Today we heard the same series of unsubstantiated accusations, now allegedly backed up by the authority of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Let me say right away that there is nothing in the OPCW report that supports the mendacious British version of Russia's involvement in the Salisbury incident. The main thing that is not there, and that the British were dying to see, is any conclusion that the substance used in Salisbury was produced in Russia. On the contrary, the speedy analysis conducted by the OPCW only confirms that such a substance could have been produced in any laboratory that had the right equipment. After all, in order to conduct a comparative analysis one must have a standard for the toxic compound, and such laboratories exist in the United Kingdom at Porton Down, and in the United States and a number of other countries. The formula for the substance has been known since 1998, when it was included in the database of the National Institute of Standards and Technology by the United States Army Edgewood Chemical Biological Center. Moreover, a search in the Google Patents online resource for the key word Novichok produces results for more than 140 patents issued in the United States alone that are related to the use of and protection from exposure to that toxic chemical.

Six weeks have already elapsed since the Salisbury incident on 4 March, and yet the gaps in this story, held together by the weakest of threads, have not only not diminished, they have multiplied at startling speed. We are not surprised by London's behaviour. At today's meeting of the OPCW's Executive Council, the British representative, whose statement was as usual based on lies and disinformation about Russia's motives, methods and means, declared yet again that

(*spoke in English*)

> "Russia has a proven record of carrying out State-sponsored assassination." Proven by whom?

(*spoke in Russian*)

Naturally, that was followed by numerous references were made to the Litvinenko affair, adducing arguments based on British jurisprudence's new vocabulary, such as

(*spoke in English*)

> "President Putin 'probably approved it'"; "'the Russian State may have been involved'"; "'the Russian State may have sponsored attacks'";

"there have been numerous suspected Russian State-sponsored assassinations".

(*spoke in Russian*)

Everything that we have seen and heard today is déjà vu. We went through all of this in the Litvinenko poisoning affair, with a complete lack of transparency from the British, who to this day have concealed any documentation that could have enabled us to put together a full picture of what had happened to him at the time. For those who do not know, I can inform them that the United Kingdom has simply classified that information.

London's modus operandi with respect to the 12 April report of the OPCW technical assistance team was no exception to this. In the one and a half pages of the document that were made public, the British forbade the OPCW's experts not only from mentioning the type of technical assistance that they had requested but even from naming the toxic chemical identified by Porton Down, preferring to conceal all that information in the confidential section of the report, whose discussion in an open Council meeting would violate the OPCW's confidentiality rules. The reason that was done seems obvious to us.

Well, if the British will not grant Council members the right to discuss what they authorized to be included in the substantive part of the report, we will discuss what is not there. Above all, what is not there is any mention of the Russian Federation, which corresponds to the conclusions that we have already heard from Porton Down. There is not the slightest mention of the extremely crucial information on the factors in the contamination of Sergei and Yulia Skripal and Nick Bailey. Nor is there any information about the history of their illness or treatment.

There is no explanation as to how a toxic chemical that is extremely unstable in liquid form, according to its alleged creator, Vil Mirzayanov, could have been detected in a high concentration almost three weeks after the incident. Nor is there a word about why this substance, which is allegedly 10 times more deadly than VX, could affect some victims seven hours after contact while others succumbed instantly. And why then — thank heavens — were the effects not fatal? Perhaps Vil Mirzayanov and the Porton Down experts are talking about different toxic chemicals.

Moreover, there is no sensible explanation in the report of how a blood sample from one of the victims taken 18 days after the incident could have contained an undecomposed toxic chemical identified by Porton Down, while this was not observed in the other victim, who suffered a more toxic level of contamination. That scenario is not only uncharacteristic for paralytic nerve agents, it might also be an indirect indication that it is highly likely that before the sample of the toxic chemical identified by Porton Down was collected, the victim was injected with the agent while in an induced coma, which is why there was no biochemical reaction.

That raises an important question. On 5 April, when I quoted Boris Johnson on the presence of samples of A-234 at Porton Down, the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom (see S/PV.8224) responded to the effect that the United Kingdom is permitted to conduct research for defence purposes. Perhaps the experts at Porton Down have investigated and are in possession of this and other toxic chemicals that are not on the relevant Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) lists. I believe that as part of the preparations of the report of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Director-General of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW for the fourth CWC Review Conference, now would be the time for the Porton Down experts to inform the scientific community about their research on A-234 for defence purposes and perhaps on other toxic chemicals that pose a threat to the goals of the Convention. But let us not labour under illusions. The line that Britain has decided to take on the Salisbury incident has made it clear that that will not happen. The United Kingdom and its allies simply have no interest in a professional discussion, while professional chemists and experts cast ever more doubt the further they go into the official British version.

Unfortunately, London's free interpretation of the provisions of the CWC only raises questions. For example, the British consistently refer to the fact that their national investigation is being conducted in accordance with paragraph 1 of article VII of the Convention. These references would be justified if it were not for one "but", which is this kind of investigation pertains only to physical and legal individuals who are under British jurisdiction. I do not believe it is necessary to point out that Russia is not under British jurisdiction. That goes without saying. In that regard, we request a clarification from the British as to whether the statements from Downing Street about Russia's alleged

involvement in the incident in Salisbury represent an attempt to put political pressure on the investigative work or the ultimate conclusions of a Scotland Yard investigation. Or it normal under the British legal system for the Government to identify the guilty party and for its investigative bodies to subsequently tailor their investigation to fit that conclusion?

I want to once again stress that any doubts about the good-faith compliance by a State party with its obligations under the Convention must be resolved, as laid down in article IX. They must be resolved, and we know of no other meaning for the English words "shall" and "should". We would be grateful for possible explanations from native English speakers about cases when those words do not imply obligation. It would be very helpful for our future practical work in the Council.

Since our repeated proposals to London to begin cooperating under article IX have been ignored, and the requests of Russia's Prosecutor General, in line with paragraph 2 of article VII, about providing legal assistance on criminal cases, have gone unanswered, no alternative remains to us but to initiate our own request under paragraph 2 of article IX with a list of questions for the United Kingdom on the incident in Salisbury on 4 March. A note to that effect was sent on 13 April by Russia's Permanent Representative in The Hague to the British via the OPCW Technical Secretariat.

In that connection, and with the aim of taking measures to strengthen the CWC, we believe it is essential that the Director-General of the Technical Secretariat should prepare and introduce at the next meeting of the OPCW Executive Council, in accordance with paragraph 5 of article XV of the Convention, a draft resolution amending the annex to the Convention listing chemicals. That would not only enable the substance A-234, identified by Porton Down, to be officially classified as a chemical warfare agent, it would put it and its precursors under the OPCW's systematic control. That is what should have been done long ago by the countries that, as it turns out, had all of the necessary information, including samples of this toxic chemical, rather than using the forums of the OPCW and the Security Council to disseminate their groundless allegations that the Russian Federation is in breach of its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The information campaign, or rather war, that the British authorities have unleashed on Russia around the so-called Skripal case is no secret. The norms of international law and of law in general, the principles and rules of diplomacy, common sense and simple basic politeness are being ignored. Against a background of deafening silence on the part of the competent British authorities on the merits of the case and a multitude of politically tinged declarations and pronouncements that have been aimed at Russia from the very beginning, new versions of what happened continue to appear, and significant discrepancies, plants and open disinformation are surfacing that London has no intention of refuting in any way. The fake rumours are spreading. The calculation is that down the road, thanks to this cacophony of unfounded accusations and references to respected organizations such as the OPCW — which allegedly fully confirmed the British conclusions about Russia's involvement, and which, I will say it again, is a total lie — Governments and society will not be able to sort out the subtleties of chemical analysis and the numerous inconsistencies in the accusations that have been made. As a famous quotation often attributed to Winston Churchill has it, "There is no such thing as public opinion. There is only published opinion." And the British and their allies have no problem with their lying assertions being disseminated by the media.

The British asked us two questions. We asked them 47 questions. Here they are. We received partial responses to two of them. There are no answers to the questions that we asked during the previous Security Council meeting on the issue on 5 April. We will have more questions. We have promised them that we will not let this go.

In order to acquaint the Council with the scientific and factual side of this affair, we will circulate separately the Russian representatives' statements at the OPCW's fifty-ninth session of the OPCW, along with a chronology of the events prepared by our Embassy in London and a copy of my statement today.

While all the shouting is going on, the British authorities have been busy working systematically to eradicate any evidence or material proof. The household pets have been destroyed and clearly no samples were taken of them. The places that the Skripals visited — the bar, the restaurant, the bench, the soil in the park and so forth — are being cleared, while ordinary citizens continue to live in Salisbury as if nothing had ever

happened. Yulia Skripal's whereabouts are unknown, and the Consulate has been given no access to her as a Russian citizen. Let me remind the Council that nobody has seen Yulia or Sergei since 4 March. Meanwhile, a crime — an attempted murder, with suggestions that it might be terrorist in nature — was committed against Russian citizens.

I would once again like to affirm our principled position, which is that we will not accept the results of any national or international investigations without having at our disposal the entire body of information — whether that is data from the criminal investigation or full technical laboratory reports — without the granting of our right to consular access to Russian citizens and, most importantly, without the direct participation of Russian experts in all operations designed to clarify what took place in Salisbury on 4 March. The only thing that we believe is unarguable right now is that London is continuing to conceal information that is critical to establishing the truth, and will not permit any transparency on the issue.

The British Embassy in Moscow once again distinguished itself when a few days ago it put out the following sensational piece of information, roughly the same as that given by the British Permanent Representatives to the OPCW and to the United Nations in today's letter to the Secretary-General (S/2018/218). First, Russia has been producing and stockpiling Novichok for the past 10 years. Secondly, research into the use of chemical warfare agents for assassination purposes has been conducted in Russia. Thirdly, beginning in 2013, Russian intelligence expanded its interest in Sergei Skripal.

Brilliant. Bravo.

I will now return to the letter from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations that she circulated today, including to the permanent members of the Security Council. As usual, it is packed with lying, unfounded and slanderous allegations. As usual, it features vocabulary such as "highly likely", "may have been" and "suspected". The United Kingdom has previously had the audacity to make categorical assertions about our chemical declarations and to discuss the working methods of our intelligence services. However, this time our British colleagues went even further. They accused President Putin of direct involvement in a military chemical programme, without quotation marks, references or mentions of "highly likely". I have always been astonished and amused by the far-fetched suggestions of our British colleagues — and not theirs alone — about how the Russian system of Government works. In London they clearly believe that the Russian President has a hobby. Any free time away from his official duties is spent on chemical-weapon programmes. I do not know if the people in London or the Permanent Mission here realize that they have gone beyond the bounds of acceptability and propriety. I think they should thank our President for being so restrained.

Why is all this necessary? The answer is banal in its obviousness. This is an attempt to defame Russia generally and to cast doubt on its legitimacy and role in the international arena. I did not say that Salisbury and Douma are connected lightly. First, because both are provocations and secondly, because both are being linked to Russia. This is an unscrupulous incitement against Russia that is designed to deepen the divide between Russia and the European Union, something that is clearly particularly timely for the United Kingdom on the eve of Brexit. That is all.

In conclusion, it seems that the moment has come to wield the classics — in this case, our Shakespeare, who in *Henry VI, Part III*, said, "Suspicion always haunts the guilty mind". Now that is how the British should try to prettily package their so-called suspicions, because otherwise they are somehow not very convincing. We even feel bad for them.

We will eagerly await the continuation of this gripping serial. If Britain drags in some new information or sensation in the spirit I have cited today, we reserve the right to request such a meeting ourselves. The United Kingdom should not think that it can hide behind its poisonous web of lies and conjecture. It has not ended with the report of the OPCW technical assistance visit. We will continue to demand that it give us the facts.

There is undoubtedly chemistry in this affair — the chemistry that links it to the Russian word for "swindle". Yes, they have pulled off quite a swindle. But we agree with them on one point. There will be no impunity and those responsible for this provocation must be held accountable.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

We would like to thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing. We are grateful to the representative of the

United Kingdom for the information that she provided to us.

Peru has noted with deep concern the incident caused by the use of a nerve agent in public spaces in the United Kingdom, which has seriously endangered the lives of at least three people. We would like to reaffirm our solidarity with the victims, to whom we wish a full recovery, and with the people in the United Kingdom who have been potentially exposed to the chemical agent in question. Peru condemns all use of chemical weapons. We believe that such a practice constitutes a threat to international peace and security, a heinous crime and a flagrant violation of the related non-proliferation regime. In the light of the investigations and the report issued by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons on the blood samples of the direct victims of the attack, we must emphasize that the Chemical Weapons Convention prohibits the use of any substance as a chemical weapon.

Lastly, we urge the parties concerned to fully cooperate with the investigations with a view to determining responsibilities and penalties as a result of the incident, in line with the principle of the peaceful resolution of disputes.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The representative of the United Kingdom has asked to make a further statement.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I will be brief. I was asked a number of questions by the Russian Ambassador. I have nothing to add to what I said in relation to the report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) that has just been published and the way in which the samples were taken. I have nothing to add to what I said on the consular aspect. I would like to stress that the investigation in the United Kingdom is indeed independent of the Government. With regard to selective adherence with regard to the OPCW or the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), we are a State party in very good standing. On the question of Porton Down, the United Kingdom does not possess chemical weapons. Porton Down is a defensive establishment that conducts research and provides scientific and technical support to the United Kingdom Government in relation to protection against chemical weapons. Protective research is permitted under the Chemical Weapons Convention. Porton Down is full compliance with the Convention and is subject to regular inspection by the OPCW. Any member State is invited and permitted to conduct an inspection at any time.

We received 16 questions from the Russian Federation under article IX of the CWC. The rules of the OPCW and the articles of the CWC make it clear that we have 10 days to respond, and we will respond. With regard to President Putin, I am happy to clarify that I was referring to the early 2000s. With regard to Litvinenko, the polonium trail literally led all the way back to Russia.

I would like to repeat something that I have said before. We respect Russia as a country. We have no quarrel with the Russian people. But we will always speak out against reckless and illegal behaviour on the part of the Russian authorities, whether it takes place in Syria or in Salisbury.

Finally, when Christmas comes, I would like to buy my colleague the Russian Ambassador a subscription to an English book club. But as it is not Christmas, I would like to return his literary favour today. The Russian account of the behaviour of the United Kingdom and what is happening on the ground in both Salisbury and Syria is a rewrite of George Orwell's *1984*, updated for the modern day and modern Russian methods.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.